

Public Hearing – March 10, 2023

Environment Committee

Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Katie S. Dykes

House Bill No. [6812](#) – An Act Prohibiting the Issuance of Otter Trawl Fishing Permits and Certain Gill Net and Long Line Licenses in the Marine Waters of the State

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this bill. The purpose of this bill is to prohibit the issuance of permits and licenses for otter trawl fishing and the use of gill nets and long lines, other than for aquaculture, in the marine waters of the state.

We **oppose** this bill and its objective to end a variety of commercial fishing practices in Connecticut's waters. Commercial fishing in Connecticut is almost entirely conducted by small family-owned businesses that make an important contribution to the state's economy. The proposed prohibition would negatively affect 53 licensed commercial fishers with follow-on negative impacts to other local businesses that purchase seafood or supply the fishing industry.

These prohibitions are not necessary because there is a strong and appropriate management framework in place in Connecticut that balances the conservation and use of our marine resources. Connecticut fisheries conducted with the gears in question are managed under interstate fisheries management bodies such as the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC), which set annual caps or "quotas" on commercial catch that are informed by science and set conservatively to ensure population sustainability. DEEP monitors commercial landings against these quotas via mandatory monthly catch reporting and takes action to reduce or stop fishing activity as necessary before annual quotas are exceeded. DEEP has also implemented net mesh size restrictions for trawl and gill nets to reduce incidental catch of non-target species or "bycatch."

Finally, if this bill is adopted into law, the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) will still issue licenses authorizing commercial fishers to use these gear types in the New York state waters portion of Long Island Sound. This outcome would put Connecticut commercial fishing businesses at a competitive disadvantage.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this proposal. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Harrison Nantz at Harrison.Nantz@ct.gov.

